



US Army Corps
of Engineers
Sacramento District
1325 J Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-2922

Public Notice

Public Notice Number: SPK-2008-00154

Date: July 15, 2008

Comments Due: August 16, 2008

In reply, please refer to the Public Notice Number

SUBJECT: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District, (Corps) is evaluating a permit application to construct the Hanford Expressway Project, which would result in impacts to approximately 1.58 acres of waters of the United States (1.34 acres permanent impacts and 0.24 acres temporary impacts), which flow to the San Joaquin River. This notice is to inform interested parties of the proposed activity and to solicit comments. This notice may also be viewed at the Corps web site at <http://www.spk.usace.army.mil/regulatory.html>.

AUTHORITY: This application is being evaluated under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act for the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States.

APPLICANT: California Department of Transportation
Zachary Parker
2015 E. Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
(559)243-8196

LOCATION: The 267-acre project area contains 2.69 acres of water of the U.S. and is located along 10.1 miles of State Route 198 between Visalia and Hanford Post Mile (PM) 0.0 – 3.3 Tulare County and PM 21.5- 28.3 Kings County. The project is located in Sections 25, 26, 27, 28, 33, 34, 35, 36, Township 18 South, Range 22 East MDB&M, City of Hanford, Kings County, California and Sections 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, Township 18 South, Range 23 East MDB&M, City of Hanford, Kings County, California, and Sections 30 and 31, Township 18 South, Range 24 East MDB&M, City of Visalia, Tulare County, California.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The applicant is proposing to convert the two-lane conventional highway to a four-lane expressway (two (2) east bound and two (2) west bound travel lanes) for 10.1 miles between State Route (SR) 43 and SR 99. Based on the available information, the overall project purpose is to expand the existing Level of Service (LOS) through 2025. The applicant believes there is a need to improve safety, correct non-standard design features, accommodate increased traffic demands, and provide route continuity for motorists.

The existing two-lane roadway is 32-feet wide with no median and 4 feet of road shoulder on either side of the travel lanes. The proposed project would widen and modify the existing two lanes (new east bound lanes) to include a pair of 12-foot wide travel lanes, a 10-foot wide paved outside shoulder, and a 5-foot wide paved inside shoulder. The two new lanes would be constructed north of the existing alignment and become the westbound travel lanes. These new lanes would include a pair of 12-foot wide travel lanes, a 10-foot wide paved outside shoulder, and a 5-foot wide paved inside shoulder. The modified east bound travel lanes and the new west bound travel lanes would be separated by an 85-foot wide open median. The project would include the construction of five frontage roads, three private

vehicle access easements, and an over crossing of the expressway at Road 68 in Tulare County.

The project as proposed would permanently fill 1.34 and/or 2,125-linear feet and temporarily impact 0.24 acres and/or 300 linear feet of the following water ways, Highline Canal, Lakeside Ditch, East Settlers Ditch, Melga Canal, West Settlers Ditch, and Cross Creek. The following paragraphs describe in detail where specific impacts would occur.

The proposed project would permanently fill 0.23 acres of waters within Highline Canal because the existing culvert would be replaced and riprap material would be placed on the banks for slope protection. The existing double box concrete culvert at Highline Canal is 16-feet wide by 6-feet tall by 108-feet long and would be replaced with a double box concrete culvert measuring 20-feet wide by 6-feet tall by 350-feet long. The proposed culvert would extend north 49 feet beyond the new Caltrans right of way to provide a 62-foot wide irrigation road access and 3,038-square foot turnaround area. The proposed culvert would extend south 50 feet beyond the new Caltrans right of away to provide a 62-foot wide irrigation road access and 3,100-square foot turnaround area.

The proposed project would permanently fill 0.42 acres of waters within Lakeside Ditch because the existing culvert would be replaced and riprap material would be placed on the banks for slope protection. The existing Lakeside Ditch double box concrete culvert is 60-feet wide by 8-feet tall by 50 feet long and would be replaced with a similar width and height culvert but would be extended approximately 435 feet . The proposed culvert would extend north 86 feet beyond the new Caltrans right of way to provide a 75-foot wide irrigation road access and 6,493-square foot turnaround area. The proposed culvert would extend south 84 feet beyond the new Caltrans right of way to provide a 75-foot wide irrigation road access and 6,342-square foot turnaround area.

The proposed project would permanently fill 0.18 acres of waters within East Settlers Ditch because the existing ditch alignment would be filled and replaced with a new straightened culvert alignment, which carries water flows under the newly expanded roadway. The existing 48-inch diameter by 32-foot long reinforced concrete pipe (RCP) culvert would be replaced with a 48 inch diameter by 310-foot long reinforced concrete pipe culvert. The proposed RCP culvert would extend north 32 feet beyond the new Caltrans right of way to provide a 30-foot wide irrigation road access and 960-square foot turnaround area. The proposed RCP culvert would extend south 67 feet beyond the new Caltrans right of way to provide a 30-foot wide irrigation road access and 2,010-square foot turnaround area.

The proposed project would permanently fill 0.30 acres of waters within Melga Canal, including extending an existing culvert, adding a second culvert within the canal for the construction of a new private driveway access, and the placement of riprap material for bank slope protection. The existing Melga Canal double box concrete culvert is 16-feet wide by 6 feet tall by 85-feet long. The existing double box concrete culvert would be extended approximately 260 feet and the width and height dimensions would remain the same. The proposed culvert would extend north 80 feet beyond the new Caltrans right of way to provide a 50-foot wide irrigation road access and 4,000-square foot turnaround area. The proposed culvert would extend south 50 feet beyond the new Caltrans right of way to provide a 50-foot wide irrigation road access and 2,500-square foot turnaround area.

The proposed project would permanently fill 0.20 acres of waters within West Settlers Ditch, including the removal of the existing 8.5-foot wide by 32-foot long double box concrete culvert and filling 430 feet of the existing ditch alignment and replacing it with a new straightened culvert alignment. The new culvert alignment would carry water flows under the newly expanded roadway. A new 54-inch diameter by 385-foot long reinforced concrete pipe (RCP) culvert would replace the existing double

box concrete culvert. The proposed RCP culvert would extend north 32 feet beyond the new Caltrans right-of-way to provide a 30-foot wide irrigation road access and 960-square foot turnaround area. The proposed culvert would extend south 30 feet beyond the new Caltrans right of way to provide a 30-foot wide irrigation road access and 900-square foot turnaround area.

The proposed project would permanently fill 0.01 acres of waters within Cross Creek, including the placement of an additional 74 (16-inch diameter pilings) into the creek to support additional bridge decking when the existing bridge is expanded and a new bridge is constructed for the new roadway. The existing bridge is 191.4-feet long and 41.75-feet wide supported by 50 pilings placed into Cross Creek. This bridge would be widened an additional 21 feet to a total of 64.5 feet and 26 additional pilings placed into Cross Creek to support the new reinforced concrete decking. A new bridge would be constructed to the north of the existing bridge to accommodate the new west bound travel lanes. The new reinforced concrete slab bridge would be 190-feet long and 42.5-feet wide and supported by 48 pilings placed into Cross Creek.

The attached 8 drawings provide additional project details.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Environmental Setting. The 267-acre project area consists mainly of open agricultural land and 2.69 acres of water of the United States. These waters consist of Highline Canal, Cross Creek, Lakeside Ditch, East Settlers Ditch, Melga Canal, and West Settlers Ditch. These waterways have sparse vegetation growing below the ordinary high water mark. Cross Creek supports the greatest amount of riparian vegetation and habitat for wildlife species. Lakeside Ditch and Cross Creek receive flows from the Kaweah River and flows to the San Joaquin River, while the other Canals receive water from the Kings River and flow into the San Joaquin River.

Alternatives. The applicant has provided four-build alternatives for this project, which are currently under review by this office. Additional information concerning the details of these project alternatives is available from the applicant. In summary the applicant selected the alternative described above after determining there were less home, utilities, and tree displacements. In addition they determined that impacts to agricultural lands, air quality, waterways, noise, water quality, wildlife, floodplain, endangered species, and cultural resources were the same for all proposed alternatives. The Corps will independently review alternatives to ensure the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative is chosen. Other alternatives may develop during the review process for this permit application. All reasonable project alternatives, in particular those which may be less damaging to the aquatic environment, will be considered.

Mitigation. The Corps requires that applicants consider and use all reasonable and practical measures to avoid and minimize impacts to aquatic resources. If the applicant is unable to avoid or minimize all impacts, the Corps may require compensatory mitigation. The applicant is proposing to construct approximately 20 acres of earthen roadside ditches (8 feet wide and 2 feet deep) within the right of way adjacent to the east and west bound lanes for the entire length of the project. The ditches would serve as natural filters for surface runoff from roads and adjacent agricultural fields. An embankment would be created to retain the water in the right of way rather than draining into Cross Creek. Approximately 32 pipe culverts (each 24 inch diameter) within the median would connect and drain into these roadside ditches. The applicant is proposing to plant 10 native willow shrubs at the top banks of Cross Creek within the right of way north of the new westbound lanes. Other native trees, such as the western sycamore and Valley oak would be planted in the right of way adjacent to the willows to allow for

nutrient uptake and create a wildlife riparian corridor. The applicant is proposing to monitor these plantings for three years. The applicant was required by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to purchase 293 credits at the Kreyenhagen Hills Conservation Bank to compensate for the loss of 267 acres of San Joaquin kit fox foraging habitat.

OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORIZATIONS: The applicant has obtained a Water quality certification, as required under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act from the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region.

HISTORIC PROPERTIES: The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has consulted under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and received a letter of concurrence from the State Historic Preservation Officer regarding this project.

ENDANGERED SPECIES: The proposed activity may affect the Federally-listed endangered San Joaquin kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis mutica*). The applicant through the Federal Highway Administration has received a biological opinion from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the effects of the project on the endangered San Joaquin kit fox. The applicant was required by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to purchase 293 credits at the Kreyenhagen Hills Conservation Bank to compensate for the loss of 267 acres of San Joaquin kit fox foraging habitat.

ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT: The proposed project will not adversely affect Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) as defined in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

The above determinations are based on information provided by the applicant and our preliminary review.

EVALUATION FACTORS: The decision whether to issue a permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impacts, including cumulative impacts, of the described activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefit, which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the described activity, must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors which may be relevant to the described activity will be considered, including the cumulative effects thereof; among those are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historic properties, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, floodplain values, land use, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, consideration of property ownership and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people. The activity's impact on the public interest will include application of the Section 404(b)(1) guidelines promulgated by the Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency (40 CFR Part 230).

The Corps is soliciting comments from the public, Federal, State, and local agencies and officials, Indian tribes, and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps to determine whether to issue, modify, condition, or deny a permit for this proposal. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, and other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment and/or an Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity.

SUBMITTING COMMENTS: Written comments, referencing Public Notice SPK-2008-00154 must be submitted to the office listed below on or before August 16, 2008

Paul Maniccia, Project Manager
US Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District
Sacramento Office
1325 J Street, Room 1480
Sacramento, California 95814 2922
Email: paul.m.maniccia@usace.army.mil

The Corps is particularly interested in receiving comments related to the proposal's probable impacts on the affected aquatic environment and the secondary and cumulative effects. Anyone may request, in writing, that a public hearing be held to consider this application. Requests shall specifically state, with particularity, the reason(s) for holding a public hearing. If the Corps determines that the information received in response to this notice is inadequate for thorough evaluation, a public hearing may be warranted. If a public hearing is warranted, interested parties will be notified of the time, date, and location. Please note that all comment letters received are subject to release to the public through the Freedom of Information Act. If you have questions or need additional information please contact the applicant or the Corps' project manager Paul Maniccia, 916-557-6704, paul.m.maniccia@usace.army.mil.

Attachments: 8 drawings